

Message Text

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ACTION INR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1361

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 4979

NO FOREIGN DISSEM/ CONTROLLED DISSEM

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TAGS: PINT, CB

SUBJ: COMMENTS ON INR STUDY ON QTE SIHANOUK AND THE KHMER
INSURGENTS UNQTE

REF: STATE 094407

1. WE HAVE READ WITH INTEREST AND GENERALLY CONCUR IN
THE EXCELLENT INR ANALYSIS QTE SIHANOUK AND THE KHMER
INSURGENTS, ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL UNQTE TRANSMITTED
IN REFTEL.

2. IN PARTICULAR, IT SEEMS TO US TO BE A DISCERNING
PRESENTATION OF THE REMARKABLE GAINS WHICH THE KHMER
INSURGENCY HAS REGISTERED OVER THE PAST YEAR AND OF ITS
RAPIDLY INCREASED MILITARY AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

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3. PERHAPS BECAUSE IT SOUGHT TO HIGHLIGHT THIS DEVELOPMENT THE ANALYSIS SEEMS TO US, HOWEVER, TO HAVE UNDERSTATED, PERHAPS UNCONSCIOUSLY, THE ROLE WHICH THE DRV UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUES TO PLAY IN THE INSURGENCY AND IN ITS MILITARY OPERATIONS. THIS IS A QUESTION OF EMPHASIS RATHER THAN DIVERGENT INTELLIGENCE DATA, SINCE WE AGREE (A) THAT THE MAJOR ENEMY MAIN FORCE UNITS PRESENT IN CAMBODIA IN 1970 AND 1971 AND WITH WHICH THE FANK WERE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER ENGAGED IN THAT TIME PERIOD (THE NVA/ VC 1 ST, 5 TH, 7 TH, AND 9 TH DIVISIONS) HAVE SINCE SHIFTED THE PRINCIPAL FOCUS OF THEIR EFFORT TO SOUTH VIETNAM; AND (B) THAT THE NVA/ VC UNITS PERMANENTLY TARGETED AGAINST FANK ARE RELATIVELY SMALL INFANTRY, ARTILLERY, AND SAPPER UNITS. (FYI, OUR CURRENT LISTING OF THESE UNITS, TOTTALLING IN ALL SOME 3,500 MEN, IS AS FOLLOWS: THE MRC 40 203 RD INF REGT, 1400 MEN, IN THE SIEM REAP/ ANGKOR WAT AREA; THE MRC 40 204 TH INFANTRY REGT, 700 MEN, IN KOMPONG CHHNANG PROVINCE; THE 367 TH NVA SAPPER GROUP, 1000 MEN, IN THE PHNOM PENH SPECIAL MILITARY REGION OR KOMPONG CHAM PROVIDE; AND THE 96 TH NCA ARTILLERY REGT, 400 MEN, IN THE PREY VENG/ SVAY RIENG AREA.) A SIGNIFICANT POINT TO NOTE IS THAT THE UNITS LISTED IN (A) ABOVE ARE STILL CAPABLE OF ENGAGING IN THE FIGHT IN CAMBODIA IF REQUIRED, AND THAT THE UNITS IN (B) ABOVE ARE THE SAME UNITS WHICH HAVE BEEN HABITUALLY TARGETED AGAINST THE FANK FOR THE LAST YEAR; THUS THERE HAS BEEN NO REALY CHANGE SINCE THE CEASE- FIRE.

4. BUT THE ANALYSIS, ALTHOUGH MENTIONING THE TRAINING, ADVISORY, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FURNISHED THE INSURGENCY BY THE NVA/ VC, GIVES IN OUR JUDGMENT INSUFFICIENT WEIGHT TO THE CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF THIS ASSISTANCE. IT IS, OF COURSE, DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY, GIVEN THE DRV PASSION FOR SECRECY AND THE ELABORATE STEPS THAT REGIME TAKES TO DENY AND DISGUISE THE PRESENCE OF ITS FORCES IN CAMBODIA. SOME PART OF THE ESTIMATED 30,000- MAN NON- COMBAT NVA/ VC LOGISTIC FORCE IN CAMBODIA PRESUMABLY CONTINUES TO SUPPLY INSURGENT UNITS, EVEN THOUGH THE LATTER ARE ALSO PARTIALLY EQUIPPED WITH CAPTURED FANK WEAPONS AND MATERIEL. ALSO, WE BELIEVE THE INSURGENT

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UNITS CONTINUE TO HAVE VIETNAMESE ADVISERS DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF DOCUMENTING THIS. NVA/ VC TRAINING ALONE COULD HARDLY ACCOUNT FOR THE RECENT BATTLEFIELD PERFORMANCE OF INSURGENT UNITS, WHICH HAVE EMPLOYED TACTICS REFLECTING MILITARY SKILLS BEYOND THAT TO BE EXPECTED OF RECENTLY FORMED AND INEXPERIENCED UNITS. IN SUM, WE VELIEVE THE INR ANALYSIS CREDITS THE INSURGENCY WITH

A GREATER INDEPENDENT MILITARY CAPABILITY THAN IT IN FACT POSSESSES. (AS AN EXAMPLE, WE HAVE BEEN STRUCK BY THE FACT THAT THE LAST MAJOR COMMANDO- SAPPER RAID AGAINST PHNOM PENH OCCURRED IN OCTOBER 1972 AND THAT NONE HAS OCCURRED SINCE THE CEASE- FIRE IN LATE JANUARY 1973. A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT THE DRV DOES NOT WISH TO EMPLOY NVA/ VC UNITS IN OPERATIONS WHICH WOULD CONFIRM ITS CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMBODIAN WAR SINCE THE CEASE- FIRE AND THAT INSURGENT UNITS ARE NOT YET ADEQUATELY TRAINED TO REPLACE THEM.)

5. NOTE ALSO THAT IT WAS ONLY TOWARDS THE END OF THE AUGUST/ NOVEMBER 1972 ENEMY OFFENSIVE THAT WE LEARNED OF THE KEY PARTICIPATION OF VIETNAMESE MRC- 40 UNITS IN THE ROUTE 5 ACTION. WE SHOULD NOT BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE THE FULL STORY NOW ON VIETNAMESE MILITARY ACTIVITY IN- COUNTRY.

6. A STATISTIC WHICH WE REGARD AS QUESTIONABLE IS THE STATEMENT THAT THE INSURGENCY CONTROLS 45 PERCENT OF CAMBODIA'S 8 MILLION PEOPLE. OUR HUNCH, BASED ON THE FLOW OF REFUGEES INTO PHNOM PENH AND PROVINCIAL CENTERS OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, IS THAT THE POPULATION DIRECTLY UNDER ENEMY CONTROL MAY NOT EXCEED 25 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL. ADMITTEDLY, THIS IS ONLY A GUESS, BUT RECENT TRENDS IN POPULATION FLOW HAVE BEEN TO GKR HELD AREAS RATHER THAN AWAY FROM THEM. WE WOULD ACCEPT 55/60 PERCENT AS A GKR FIGURE; THE REMAINDER ARE UNDER NO CLEAR CONTROL.

7. LET US REPEAT THAT THE INR ANALYSIS SEEMS TO US A FINE PRODUCT WITH THE ESSENTIALLY MINOR CAVEATS NOTED ABOVE.

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